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THE COURIER SPORTS

What to watch

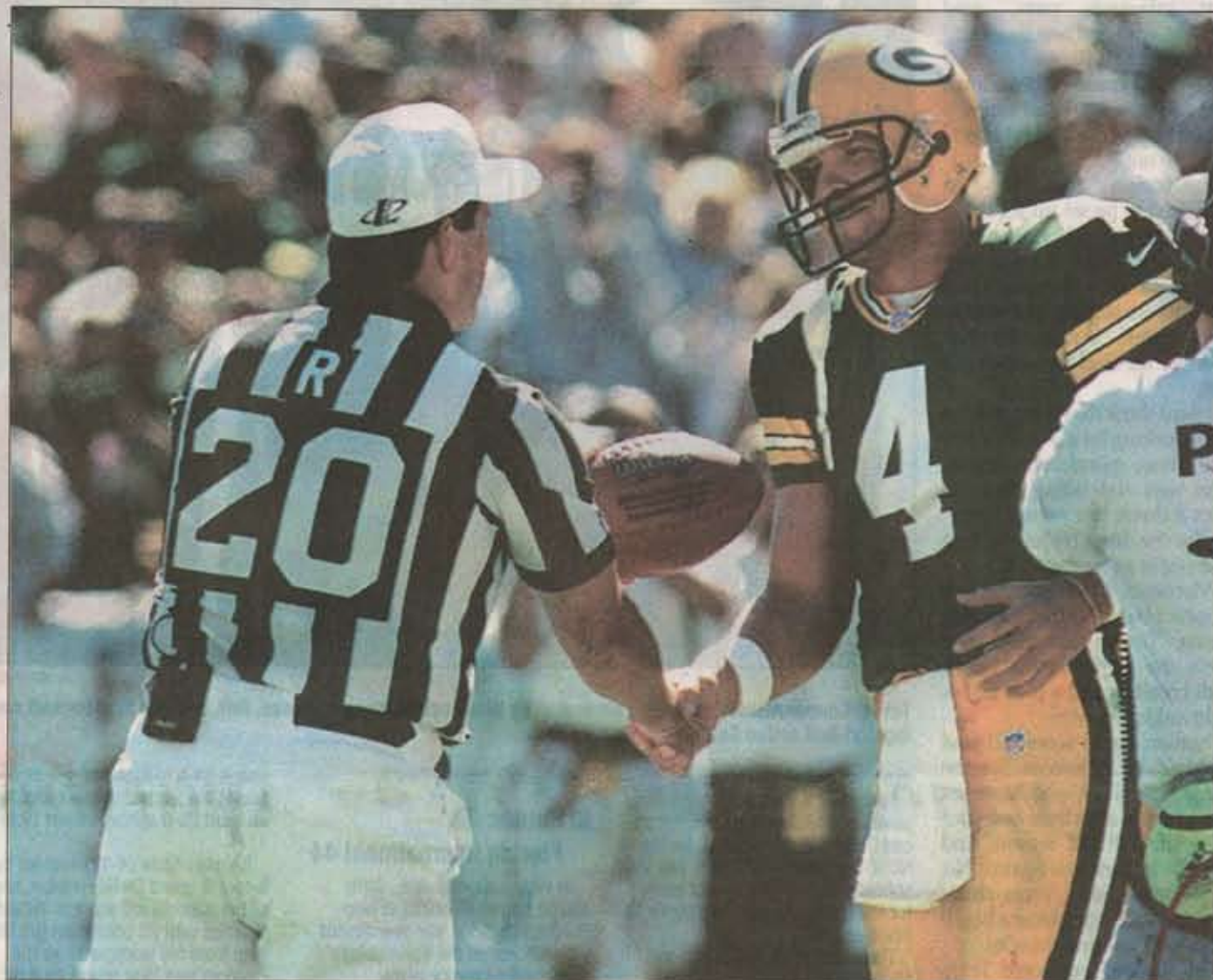


- **What:** NFL football
- **Teams:** Titans at Colts
- **Time:** 7:15 p.m., today
- **Channel:** KWVL
- **Why:** Tennessee needs a victory at Indianapolis to clinch its first playoff spot in four seasons, and it's entirely possible, especially if the Colts sit their starters.

C1

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 30, 2007

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NFL official Larry Nemmers, a Waterloo native, hands Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre the ball he used to throw his 153rd touchdown in 1997, a throw that broke Bart Starr's franchise record for TD passes.



PHOTO FURNISHED

Larry Nemmers (left), an NFL official and Waterloo native, poses with his brother, Bob (right) and Bob's son, Zach.

NEMMERS

Waterloo native to transition into role as replay assistant
 From page C1

"I'm going to be 65 before next season starts," said Nemmers. "I think it was time. My wife and I talked about it last year. We made the decision last spring, so I wrote the letter of retirement."

Nemmers' decision did not catch the family by surprise. His youngest brother, Bob, began taping Larry's games to give the younger members of the family a chance to see one of their own referees at football's highest level.

"That's why we did it — we knew it was coming," said Bob, who lives in Waterloo. "We were expecting it."

When the 2008 season begins, though, Larry Nemmers will not be parked on the couch at his home in Missouri. Far from it.

He will move to the press box, where Nemmers will officially become a "replay assistant." In other words, he will help the head referee when calls are reviewed.

During his time as the lead official on the turf, Nemmers worked about 30 hours a week just to prepare for a game. That load will decrease when he goes to the replay booth, but he'll still be flying to cities around the country during the season.

"I'm not going to be completely out of it," said Nemmers. "That probably takes some of the sting out of retirement away a little bit. As far as travel, that will be the same because I'll still be part of the crew. I just won't be the person in charge of the weekend — planning meetings, where to go to eat. I won't have all that stuff to do. I'll do some work during the week, but nothing compared to what I have now."

Nemmers, a retired educator and former football player at Upper Iowa, had a long and varied career as an official even before he reached the NFL 22 years ago.

He worked as a high school football and basketball referee in Illinois, then spent nine years toiling in the Big Ten. Before joining the NFL, Nemmers was a member of the crew that offi-

ciated the 1984 Rose Bowl.

Beginning as a side judge, Nemmers eventually became a head referee. He worked in Super Bowl XXV 1991 — and served as an alternate for Super Bowl XXXV in 2001.

Nemmers handed a football to Brett Favre when the Green Bay quarterback broke Bart Starr's franchise record for touchdown passes in 1997. He was there when New York Giants punter Jeff Feagles set the NFL mark for consecutive games played two seasons ago.

Even when Nemmers isn't working a key game, he has been a personal consultant for his family. During the 2001 AFC title game, when the controversial "tuck rule" call helped New England rally for an overtime victory against Oakland, Bob Nemmers called his brother in Springfield.

"(Larry) said, 'No, it was the right call,'" said Bob. "We always ask him about a particular game and why a call was made. That's the interesting part."

"We don't listen to what the (television) commentators have to say. We hear it from Larry."

With his final regular-season game as a head referee on the horizon, Nemmers said he hadn't thought about it much. Yet he felt his approach wouldn't vary much from all those other Sundays, good or bad.

"When the time comes, I'm sure it's going to hit me a bit," said Nemmers. "But I've treated every game my whole career as an important game because it's important to the players, coaches and fans. That's the way I look at every game."

Nemmers said he won't miss any specific players or coaches when he climbs from the field to the replay booth. It's the Sundays and Monday nights that he'll cherish.

"It's just the game itself," said Nemmers. "It's so big. The NFL has done a tremendous job of marketing their product. The decisions they've made — the commissioners and the owners — have been just tremendous. They've done the right thing."

"It isn't any particular person. It's just the game itself."

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OFFICIAL NOTICE

Waterloo native Nemmers ready to hang up his NFL whistle

By JIM SULLIVAN
 Courier Sports Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — The first flag is firmly planted in Larry Nemmers' memory.

Making his National Football League officiating debut, Nemmers worked the Green Bay-New England game in September 1985. He caught a Packer wide receiver pushing a defensive back and the yellow hanky flew. To Nemmers, who had worked for years to become an NFL official, that offensive pass interference flag signaled the start of something big.

"When you set your goals and you achieve them, you never

forget," said Nemmers as he recalled that penalty from a bygone era.

More than 20 years later, the clock is about to run out on Nemmers' career on the field. Today, he will be the head referee when the New York Jets host Kansas City in the regular-season finale. There may be a playoff game after that, but the days in a striped shirt, with a whistle at the ready, will not continue past 2007.

A Waterloo native and Upper Iowa University alumnus, Nemmers simply believed it was time to pull up stakes.

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PHOTO FURNISHED

Nemmers is seen making a ruling on the JumboTron at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field in a Sept. 16 game between the Steelers and the Bills.